

RSCDS Glasgow Branch Seniors' Group

On October 13th, the Autumn meeting of the Seniors' Group was held as usual in the Crookston Hotel where everyone received a warm welcome, in particular, Ruth Beattie, our Honorary President, and Muriel Bone, who as Chairman of Glasgow Branch conveyed good wishes from the Committee to our Group. After lunch, we were entertained by Peter Knapman, who, with the help of his wife, Sheila, had brought along not just a piano keyboard but a 'stage piano' which has a richer tone.



Peter, a past Chairman of the Glasgow Branch (1998-2000) has been the mainstay of the New Kilpatrick SCD Club for many years, and he composed the popular dance *Good Hearted Glasgow* (music by David Ross). His knowledge of Scottish Country Dancing and the music associated with it provided us with a fascinating programme. Although he was brought up in England, Peter was introduced to Scottish Country Dancing by his parents, and danced first to piano music, and later, as a student in London, to McBain's Band which supplied great music to dance to. He recalled the enthusiasm of his friend Ian Muir, whose own musical talent enabled him to deputise successfully when seamlessly filling in for any member of McBain's, without upsetting their distinctive style. Peter shared with us his wide knowledge of the music for Scottish Country Dancing, pointing out that the source of many of the tunes danced to was often lost or forgotten, but over the years these tunes were adapted, and many became completely associated with a specific dance, for example, *Hamilton House* and *The New Rigged Ship*. Peter recalled some of the tunes of Scott Skinner, Neil Gow, and William Marshall, and played them to us, illustrating the beautiful timing so fitting for dancing.

Peter himself was taught by Mary Stoker, a wonderful but very exacting teacher. Mary insisted that the timing of one's steps fitted exactly into the music, making the dance flow. One didn't dance to show off, but rather to allow the dance to evolve. He recalled his early days in dancing, when, at a function, dancers were not reminded of the pattern of a dance – you just knew it. There were also exhilarating occasions, when dancers were challenged in a set, as each new leading couple had to respond to the music of a different dance. Peter pointed out the subtle difference between slow airs and strathspeys, and played some lovely selections to illustrate this. He also played some traditional tunes adapted by Robert Burns for his songs. Also there were memories of events when demonstration teams performed, in particular, at the 1988 Garden Festival when teams appeared at least four days every week, in the evenings and at weekends. Because these were often part of live broadcasts, this involved exact timings. Robbie Shepherd and Jim Johnston were part of this programme. Peter recalled one memorable occasion when the dance performed was a thirty-twosome!



With his wealth of musical knowledge and of dancing, as well as his beautiful piano playing, Peter gave us a delightful afternoon's entertainment and so many happy memories to take away with us.

Eleanor McArthur, Seniors' Group Member